



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Highlights

July 2019: The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Conte Refuge Participates in Hosting USFWS Directorate



Photo Credit: USFWS

Staff from Conte Refuge hosted members of the USFWS Directorate, who were meeting in the Northeast Region at the end of July. The entire directorate team learned about the Refuge's Urban Partnership Program with a visit to the Springfield Science Museum in Springfield, MA. The group also enjoyed a boat tour along the Connecticut River, learning about Conte's work within the watershed. In this photo Principal Deputy Director Margaret Everson visits the *Conte Corner* in Springfield, Massachusetts.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Chief of National Wildlife Refuge System Visits Fannie Stebbins Unit of Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

Cynthia Martinez, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, along with senior management for the Northeast Region, visited the Fannie Stebbins Division of the Conte Refuge this month. Martinez's visit to Fannie Stebbins was an opportunity for us to highlight our ongoing partnerships with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and The Nature Conservancy, and the work we are doing to restore flood plain forest habitat. The partnership leveraged more than \$600,000 for flood plain forest restoration and long term care of the property.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Testing out the "Conte Cutter" For Invasive Removal



Photo Credit: USFWS

Staff and partners worked to remove water chestnut from Log Pond Cove in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This year, to reduce the amount of herbicide being used to treat water chestnut, Conte staff worked on refining the "Conte Cutter", a newly designed aquatic mower. This 27 acre cove has been a test for this combination of mechanical removal, partnered with herbicide treatment of water chestnut.

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Youth Accomplishment at Nulhegan Basin



The Northern Conte YCC crew in collaboration with Northwoods Stewardship and the Vermont River Conservancy built a public access canoe launch at the Nulhegan Basin Division. The river access is constructed of stone steps and will provide paddlers with a safe portage location that includes parking for vehicles and trailers.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

Reaching Urban Youth in Partnership with Eagle Eye Institute



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month Conte Refuge partnered with the Eagle Eye Institute and Kestrel Land Trust to connect urban youth with educational outdoor and nature related activities. Working with middle and high school students from Holyoke, Mass, we conducted programs that included birding, wetland life and habitats, ecological health and careers in natural resources. We held programs at a city park in Holyoke, as well as Conte's Fort River Birding and Nature Trail. Students learned how to use binoculars, ID birds and build bird boxes, they explored life in a wetland by collecting macro-invertebrates and frogs, and experimented with the refuge's River Table. We look forward to continuing the partnership with Eagle Eye institute, working with kids throughout the school year.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Girls Inc. Extern Spends July at Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge was pleased to host a local high school student through the Girls Inc. Eureka Externship Program. Amadora Bompastore spent the month of July assisting Visitor Service staff with a number of educational programs, as well as helping with upkeep of the pollinator garden. This is the Refuge's third year working with Girls Inc. but our first year hosting a Eureka Extern. The experience was beneficial for everyone involved. We look forward to our continued partnership with Girls Inc. in the future.

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Summer Fun with Springfield Youth



This month Conte Refuge engaged hundreds of Springfield Youth with programs through the Department of Parks and Recreation. Students were active catching and identifying pollinators, learning how to ID birds and trees, and spent time fishing in Forest Park. Conte staff traveled to several locations within the city to work with students, utilizing the outdoor spaces in their communities. One group of 60 students finished the month with a field trip to our Fort River Division in Hadley where they explored pond life, saw and even touched a variety of songbirds and practiced how biologists track wildlife using telemetry. It was an exceptionally busy month but well worth the time spent with such energetic and enthusiastic students.

Photo Credit:

Springfield Park and Rec For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Partnering for Habitat Restoration and Public Access

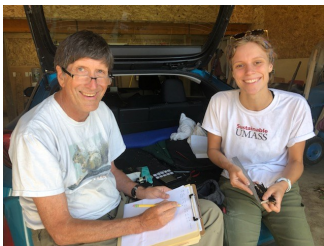


Conte staff worked with local landowners and the town of Sunderland to restore habitat along the Connecticut River and increase public access to the river. Working with state and local partners, and the town of Sunderland, we installed a 3/4 mile ADA accessible river walk and boat ramp, while also restoring riparian habitat along the river. Staff and volunteers removed invasive plants and replaced them with pollinator friendly species along a 600 foot stretch of the river. The project has increased access for boating and fishing in the Connecticut River.

Photo Credit: USFWS

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Partnership with Audubon Continues



Conte refuge continues to work with Mass Audubon, collaborating on a landscape based aerial insectivore initiative. We have been monitoring and recording data at a number of nest sites this season, and will publicly share results some time in the fall.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS



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Wetland Restoration Update at Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

The aquatic pollinator “exhibit” along the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail continues to improve. Volunteers and interns have been adding new species to the wetland that was created in a portion of the cool season grass field. The topography and the clay laden soils made it possible to provide this experience to visitors. It was also popular for breeding purposes to several species of amphibians this past spring.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Partnering for Habitat Restoration and Public Access



Photo Credit: USFWS

The artificial nest structures that were designed and installed at three locations off the Fort River Division for experimental barn swallow nesting purposes were well received this year. In all three locations, barn swallows used the structures. It is our hope we can employ the barn swallow as a charismatic ambassador for an aerial insectivore initiative (from birds to bats) that will support our connecting people with nature efforts. The two adults and five hatch year (middle five) used a structure in a location where there was no previous history of barn swallow use.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Update: Ceiling at Fort River Stables



Photo Credit: USFWS

As seen in the photo, the second floor of the stables is starting to merge with the ground floor, under the heaviness of its own weight.

Operationally, the failing of this structure is of great concern due to its proximity of the building to our ground transformer, located only five feet away from the north wall. The ground transformer handles all the power for the operational hub on the division.

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